

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 HA-05
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ARA-10
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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
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INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMED
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2267

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, PORG, USC, ET, SO, NI
SUBJECT: VISIT TO LAGOS OF SOMALI MINES MINISTER KASSIM

REF: LAGOS 2110

1. AS A RESULT OF MY CONVERSATION YESTERDAY WITH SOMALI CHARGE'
(SEE REFTEL), SOMALI MINERALS MINISTER KASSIM ASKED ME TO COME
TO SOMALI EMBASSY THIS MORNING TO DISCUSS THE OGADEN PROBLEM.

2. GARBA DEPARTED FOR TRIPOLI YESTERDAY WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO
RECEIVE KASSIM. HOWEVER, GARBA ARRANGED FOR KASSIM TO SEE
OBASANJO THIS MORNING. MY CONVERSATION WITH KASSIM TOOK PLACE
SHORTLY AFTER HIS MEETING WITH OBASANJO.

3. I WAS UNABLE TO SOLICIT SIGNIFICANT SUBSTANCE FROM KASSIM
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CONCERNING HIS CONVERSATION WITH OBASANJO. HE SEEMED IMPRESSED
BY OBASANJO'S EVEN-HANDED STATESMANSHIP, AND SAID HE UNDERSTOOD
WHY OBASANJO AND GARBA HAD TO BE SO CAREFUL NOT TO SAY ANYTHING
THAT MIGHT IMPLY TO ONE SIDE ANY PARTIALITY TOWARD THE OTHER.
HE SAID OBASANJO HAD PLEDGED NIGERIA'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO
WORKING FOR A SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM WITHIN THE OAU FRAMEWORK.
KASSIM STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD 'SOLUTION,' SAYING HE

BELIEVED OBASANJO UNDERSTOOD THAT MERE CESSATION OF THE FIGHTING OR WITHDRAWAL OF MILITARY FORCES COULD HARDLY CONSTITUTE A SATISFACTORY RESULT OF NIGERIAN GOOD OFFICES. WHAT WAS IMPORTANT WAS A LASTING RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM, WHICH KASSIM DEFINED AS ETHIOPIAN OCCUPATION OF WESTERN SOMALIA. 'SELF-DETERMINATION' UNDER ETHIOPIAN SOVEREIGNTY WAS A LUDICROUS OPTION.

4. I WAS THEN TREATED TO THE INEVITABLE SOMALIAN INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY, INCLUDING CATEGORIC REJECTION OF THE MENELIK TREATY, WHOSE INVALIDITY IS CLEARLY ESTABLISHED IN SOMALI MINDS BY THE UNITED NATIONS CALL IN THE EARLY '50S FOR A NEGOTIATED DEMARCATION OF THE OGADEN BORDER.

5. KASSIM REITERATED THE FAMILIAR LINE THAT SOVIET HEGEMONY WILL BE THE RESULT IF THE US DOES NOT HEED ITS FRIENDS' CALLS FOR ASSISTANCE. IF INDEED WE COULD NOT SEND ARMS, AT THE VERY LEAST WE SHOULD PROVIDE 'POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT.' KASSIM OF COURSE REJECTS THE THESIS THAT SOMALI FORCES HAVE TRANSGRESSED ON OAU RECOGNIZED FRONTIER WHILE ADMITTING THE PRESENCE OF REGULAR ARMY TROOPS, KASSIM SAYS THEY ARE RESISTING ETHIOPIAN EXPANSIONISM. SOMALI MOBILIZATION IS NOT A SIGN OF DESPERATION OR WEAKNESS, AS CLAIMED BY AN ILL-INFORMED PRESS, BUT RATHER OF DETERMINATION TO RESIST ETHIOPIAN COLONIALISM 'TO THE BITTER END.' 'WE WILL SINK IN OUR HEELS - WE ARE MUCH STRONGER IN WESTERN SOMALIA (VIZ. OGADEN) THAN OUR ENEMIES BELIEVE.'

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6. KASSIM MAINTAINS THAT SOVIET AND CUBAN ASSURANCES THAT SOMALIA PROPER WILL NOT BE ATTACKED ARE WORTHLESS. 'THEY HAVE ALREADY BOMBARDED OUR TOWNS WITH MORTARS AND PLANES THEY FLY.' HE SAID SOMALIA HAS CAPTURED INVASION PLANS OF THE HARGEISA-BERBERA REGION. THE SOVIETS ARE BEHIND THESE PLANS 'BECAUSE THEY WANT TO TEACH US A LESSON.'

7. KASSIM WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE SOMALI AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, DEFINITELY A JUNIOR PARTNER IN THIS DUO. THE AMBASSADOR SAID SOMALIA WAS AWARE OF THE PROPOSED SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION BUT DISTURBED THAT ITS EXACT TERMS HAD NEVER BEEN MADE CLEAR TO HIS GOVERNMENT. KASSIM SAID HE SAW NO POINT IN UN ACTION. NOR DID HE BELIEVE THE OAU COULD PLAY AN EFFECTIVE ROLE UNTIL SOVIET/CUBAN WITHDRAWAL FROM AT LEAST THE OGADEN AREA HAD BEEN ACHIEVED THROUGH US PRESSURES ON MOSCOW. HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN OUT AS TO WHETHER SIAD WOULD BE WILLING TO WITHDRAW SOMALI TROOPS AS A PRE-CONDITION TO NEGOTIATIONS.

8. KASSIM WAS SCORNFUL OF THE MENGISTU REGIME, SAYING THAT MENGISTU'S PERSONAL SECURITY HAD TO BE ASSURED BY THE KGB AND THAT MAJOR DECISIONS WERE BEING MADE FOR HIM BY HIS SOVIET AND CUBAN ALLIES.

9. COMMENT: KASSIM NOW PROCEEDS TO LIBREVILLE TO BRIEF PRESIDENT BONGO. HE SAID ANOTHER SOMALI DELEGATION WAS IN TRIPOLI FOR SIMILAR PURPOSES AT THE OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING. HE WOULD AWAIT INSTRUCTIONS FROM IAD AS TO HIS ITINERARY AFTER LIBREVILLE. REFERRING TO HIS CONVERSATION WITH SECRETARY VANCE AND BRZEZINSKI IN WASHINGTON IN EARLY JANUARY, HE SAID HE WOULD BE PLEASED TO PRESENT THE SOMALI CASE AGAIN IN WASHINGTON IF THAT WOULD BE WELCOME. SPRINKLING HIS ARTICULATE ENGLISH WITH SOMALI PROVERBS AND LATIN ASPHORISMS, KASSIM IS INDEED A CHARMERM HE MAKES THE BEST OF A TOUGH QUICK INTELLECT AND VIBRANT PERSONALITY TO PRESENT A DIFFICULT IF NOT FLAWED ARGUMENT IN HIGHLY PERSUASIVE TERMS.
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